

That You May Know The Certainty

LESSON 13: JESUS'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM, PART 3 (LUKE 11:37-12:34)

Jesus had been speaking to the crowds and addressing those who were trying to test Him (i.e. the Pharisees). Many had demonstrated they were unwilling to let the Light of Jesus shine on them to enlighten their lives. Now, Jesus continued to address the Pharisees and the crowds.

WOES PRONOUNCED ON THE PHARISEES AND EXPERTS IN THE LAW (LUKE 11:37-54)

11:37-44. Jesus accepted an invitation to eat at a Pharisee's house. But, when He went in, He did not keep the tradition of the elders to ceremonially wash His hands (note this was not commanded in the Law of Moses, Mark 7:1-4). Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for looking clean on the outside but being unclean (full of greed and evil) on the inside. Instead, they needed to have hearts willing to give to the poor (e.g. take care of their needy parents, Mark 7:8-13). Jesus then declared three woes to the Pharisees (compare with Matthew 23:1-36). First, He warned them concerning their commitment to detailed tithing (of even their herbs, which they should have done, Deuteronomy 14:22-29;) while neglecting the more fundamental commands for justice and love (Micah 6:6-8; Deuteronomy 6:5). Second, He warned them concerning their desire for prestige and praise (Matthew 23:6-12; Luke 14:7-11). Third, He warned them concerning their being full of spiritual death (like graves) that worked to defile people without their knowledge (as an unmarked grave would cause one who touched it to become defiled unintentionally, Numbers 19:16-22; Matthew 23:27-28).

11:45-54. An expert in the Law recognized that what Jesus was saying against the Pharisees also was an insult to them (they apparently studied the Law with the same spirit). Jesus pronounced woes on them also. First, Jesus warned them for the way they put heavy burdens on others to keep the Law (binding human tradition and teaching beyond the Law's requirement) but would not keep these requirements themselves (Matthew 23:2-4). Second, Jesus warned them for appearing to honor the prophets their fathers killed (Abel to Zechariah, Genesis 4:1-8; 2 Chronicles 24:17-22) but continuing in the same rebellious spirit toward God's messengers to kill and

persecute them (i.e. the apostles and prophets). God would hold that generation responsible for their rebellion against Him! Third, Jesus warned that they were not giving true knowledge of God's Law (as they were adding their interpretations and opinions to the Law) and hindered people from gaining the true knowledge of the Law they sought. After these woes, the scribes and Pharisees tried to cross-examine Him and trap Him up in what He said.

JESUS TEACHES AGAINST HYPOCRISY, FEAR, DENIAL, AND BLASPHEMY (LUKE 12:1-12)

12:1-7. A crowd of many thousand people formed outside the house trampling on each other in their desire to hear Jesus. Jesus then addressed His disciples, warning them about the leaven of hypocrisy demonstrated by the Pharisees (outwardly devout but inwardly unrighteous) that could easily spread to others. Jesus warned that everything will be exposed – whether covered, hidden, occurring in the darkness, or whispered. God sees and knows everything that happens (even the secret things of the heart) and will deal fairly with it all (Proverbs 15:3; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Hebrews 4:13). His disciples must not fear those who try to harm them physically but cannot do anything to destroy their souls (Matthew 10:26-31). Instead, their focus should be on fearing and serving the God who can destroy both soul and body in Hell (Mark 9:43-48)! After all, God sees and cares about all His people – even more than the sparrows He cares for.

12:8-12. Though there would be many opponents to Jesus's followers, Jesus wanted them to recognize that those who acknowledge (confess, profess) Jesus before others so as to follow Him will be acknowledged by the Son of Man before God's angels but those who deny (disavow) their belief in and association with Jesus will be denied before God's angels (Matthew 10:32-33). People would be able to speak against (blaspheme) Jesus while He was on the earth and could still be forgiven (as the Holy Spirit would come and lead to the gospel being preached, John 14:25-26; 16:12-15; Acts 2). However, those who speak against and blaspheme the Holy Spirit (not a one-time action, but a rejection throughout life) would never be forgiven (since no other Revelator was coming). The apostles were then told not to worry when they would be dragged by their enemies before powerful people because the Holy Spirit would teach them what they should say (Acts 3-5, 22-26).

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT MONEY AND POSSESSIONS (LUKE 12:13-34)

12:13-21. Someone in the crowd wanted Jesus to help settle a dispute with his brother about their inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:15-17; Numbers 27:8-11). Yet, Jesus indicated it was not His purpose to judge/arbitrate in such matters. Instead, He warned about greed/covetousness that always has a desire for more and more. For, Jesus taught that one's life does *not* consist of physical possessions. To illustrate the point, He told a parable about a rich man who had a prosperous crop and built bigger barns to store everything he had so he could take it easy and enjoy himself for many years. Yet, God saw this man as a fool, as his life was demanded of him that night (i.e. he died). All his physical possessions were of no help to him at this time. Jesus concluded that this will be the sad condition of anyone who stores up treasure for himself on this earth without being rich toward God (e.g. in faith and good works).

12:22-34. Turning to His disciples, Jesus proceeded to teach about the need not to be worried (drawn in different directions) about their physical lives, including the necessities of food and clothing. First, God takes care of feeding the birds (i.e. ravens) without them being knowledgeable of farming and people are worth much more than the birds. Second, they cannot change anything by worrying (e.g. life expectancy). Third, God takes care of clothing the wildflowers (who are more spectacularly clothed than Solomon) without laboring and spinning thread for clothing, and these quickly disappear. These examples should help disciples not put their focus on striving after earthly things that cause anxiety. The Gentiles (who are not focused on God) seek those things. God, however, knows that His people need such things. Therefore, Jesus's disciples must put their focus on seeking first the things concerning God's kingdom and trust God to provide for their physical necessities. In doing this, the Father delights in giving kingdom blessings. Rather than focusing on earthly treasures that are temporary, Jesus's disciples must focus on the inexhaustible treasure in Heaven (1 Peter 1:3-4). If one's heart is focused on earthly treasures, then anxieties, greed, and selfishness follow. But, if one's heart is focused on heavenly treasures, then selflessness, faith, and good works follow.

CONCLUSION

Jesus has taught and rebuked various audiences during this lesson. He has denounced the religious hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. He has encouraged and instructed His disciples. He has rebuked greed and covetousness. And, He has taught faith and focused pursuit of God's kingdom.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

How did Jesus conduct Himself concerning the ritual washing before dinner?

What "woes" did Jesus pronounce against the Pharisees?

What "woes" did Jesus pronounce against the experts in the Law?

How was the hypocrisy of the Pharisees like leaven?

Why should Jesus's followers fear God and not people?

How should people respond to Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

Why did Jesus warn against greed/covetousness?

Why should Jesus's followers not be worried about their physical lives?

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